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Henry A. Wallace's Irrigation Frontier: on the Trail of the Corn Belt Farmer, 1909

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Henry A. Wallace's Irrigation Frontier: On the Trail of the Corn Belt Farmer, 1909, edited with an introduction by Richard Lowitt and Judith Fabry. Western History Library, vol. 58. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991. 228 pp. Notes, illustrations, index. \$24.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL W. SCHUYLER, UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT KEARNEY

Following his junior year at Iowa State College, Henry A. Wallace, then just twenty-one years old, was sent by his family to tour the western part of the United States to observe farming and irrigation techniques and to determine how transplanted midwestern farmers were adapting to the arid climate of the West. Traveling by railroad, automobile, team and buggy, horseback, bicycle, and even on foot, the young Wallace interviewed farm families and visited principal private and government irrigation projects in Kansas, New Mexico, Arizona, southern California, Washington, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, and Nebraska. *Henry A. Wallace's Irrigation Frontier: On the Trail of the Corn Belt Farmer, 1909*, is a collection of fifteen essays Wallace wrote and published in *Wallaces' Farmer* about his journey through the West. The volume also includes a twenty-five page introductory essay by Richard Lowitt and Judith Fabry.

The book makes several contributions of importance to scholars of western history. First, the introduction provides useful information for beginning students about the early stages of irrigation history and about Wallace's family history in Iowa. Second, Wallace's essays provide a good picture of agricultural developments in the West at the turn of the twentieth century. The young Wallace was an astute observer who recognized that public and private irrigation, although still in its infancy, would increase the number of farms and would transform farming techniques in the region. Wallace was not only interested in irrigation and scientific change; he was also curious about family life on western farms. His essays include meticulous detail that will help students of the West better understand rural attitudes and lifestyles at the turn of the twentieth century.

Finally, the essays in this volume are significant because they enhance our understanding of Henry A. Wallace during his formative years. For the most part, Wallace's essays are descriptive, journalistic accounts of what he saw and heard. The essays also reveal, however, his commitment to progressive causes, his romantic view of the importance of the family farm, his enthusiasm for government rather than private irrigation projects, his concerns about exploitive real estate agents, his commitment to conservation, his hope that farmers

would embrace the farm cooperative movement, and, most important, his conviction that science and experimentation would provide farmers with security on the land while improving the quality of life on the farm. Franklin D. Roosevelt's future secretary of agriculture seemed to be completely optimistic about the impact that irrigation would have on agriculture. Wallace concluded that small irrigated farms of forty acres or less would not only enjoy prosperity, but also would create "superior" farmers committed to cooperation, community, and the democratic way of life. Although Wallace considered the matter briefly, he seemed little concerned that irrigation and technological change would lead to overproduction, increased competition, and ultimately to a dramatic reduction in the number of farmers needed to work the land.

The volume accomplishes what it attempts to do—to provide the reader with introductory information about early irrigation history in the West and to provide in a convenient collection the essays Wallace wrote about his western trip. The focus on irrigation is appropriate and provides useful information about an often neglected subject. On the other hand, the time period covered during Wallace's trip is very brief and may limit interest in the book to specialists in agricultural history and students seeking more information about Wallace's early years.

From New Day to New Deal: American Farm Policy from Hoover to Roosevelt, 1928–1933, by David E. Hamilton. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991. xi, 333 pp. Notes, bibliographical essay, index. \$39.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY RICHARD S. KIRKENDALL, UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

David E. Hamilton, an associate professor of history at the University of Kentucky, is well known to many Iowa historians who were in the state in the 1970s and 1980s. Then, he was an undergraduate at Iowa State University, a graduate student at the University of Iowa, an energetic researcher in the libraries of the state, and a brilliant participant in historical programs. Now, he thanks a number of Iowans for their help. His interest in agriculture and farm policy grew naturally out of the life of the state, and his interpretation reflects the influence of one of its most distinguished historians, Ellis Hawley.

In *From New Day to New Deal*, Hamilton examines the development of American farm policy in a pivotal period, 1928–1933. After a powerful introduction, he surveys the debate over farm policy in the years just before 1928 and then moves on to Herbert Hoover's ideas

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